

Contributions

SLANDERING GOD'S WORD—NO. 1

G. W. RENCH

The Bible claims to be an *authoritative* book. It is so authoritative that it pronounces eternal woes on him who dares add anything to it or subtract anything from it or preach it in any other way. The Bible settles some questions—settles them once for all time. One of the most ridiculous spectacles on the face of the earth, to me, is for poor, weak man to stand out against the wisdom and judgment of God, and contend that some questions ought to be settled according to their way of thinking, when God has, years and years ago, settled the very question under discussion. It must be an amazing spectacle to our kind Heavenly Father to see man doing this, and yet how often do we see this, even by those who say they believe the book. I have often wondered why such persons do not let the Word be their authority if they believe it. There is something wrong with the one who says he believes in the Bible and then refuses to be governed by the decisions found in it.

For this reason, as a consistent believer in God's word, I can not be on all sides of all questions at the same time. I know some good people who try to be, however. There is a kind of lizard that has the power of changing its color to the same hue as that upon which it is crawling. If it is resting on a green leaf, its color is green, if on a dark log, its color is dark.

It is wonderful that there are so many people—even teachers—who try to change their color so that it is difficult to tell where they stand. They play with God's truth as though it were a mere English grammar that is to be revised next year anyhow. They take questions which God has clearly and positively settled in His Book and discuss what would be best to do with them, as though not one word was said about them in the Book and if there was it amounted to nothing. What a slander on the old Book that has survived criticism and abuse for centuries! What a stigma on our religion which many profess to accept but virtually reject! How it must try the patience of our kind Heavenly Father to stand in such an attitude! And how it helps to make unbelievers!

It affords me the greatest joy to be able to say to my Methodist, Disciple, or Presbyterian brother, and without fear of gainsaying, "You can not put your finger on a single requirement in God's word that you have in your practice but that I have it in mine. Therefore, so far as your practice is safe, mine is safe. But," I remark, "the Bi-

ble settles other questions which you have not embodied in your practice, just as certainly as it settles any question whatever, and I am committed to the faithful keeping of *every* commandment and decision in the Book." Am I not consistent?

FOOTWASHING LORD'S SUPPER AND COMMUNION—A TRINITY—No. 1

I. D. BOWMAN

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three but the greatest of these is charity.

We often hear the charge against the ordinances that they are only forms and that those who obey them are no better than those that do not; that many of their strongest advocates produce no fruit; that they lack love, are pharisaical and do not at all manifest the Spirit of Christ. After making due allowance for prejudices, we confess that there is much truth in such statements. As one who has carefully observed the effect that they produce upon the lives of men, I am compelled to admit that a very large number are made worse rather than better by their observance.

For years I seemed to be but little benefited by them; at the same time I saw others apparently growing worse and worse all the time who were very faithful in obeying this form, and had I not been sure that God's word taught them, I surely would have given them up.

In as much then as some good people seem to become disheartened and turn from them, and others grow worse and worse by obeying them, I feel led, I trust by the Holy Spirit, to trace the causes and give the remedy for this condition of things.

I. THE CAUSE

1. Letter obedience. Christ gave them, he says do them and our intelligence says obey; hence a cold, formal, intellectual, letter obedience.

Sometimes desiring to keep the services secretive as possible, half ashamed, and yet afraid to refuse to obey; but rush them through and get rid of them as soon as possible. Then dread the near approach of the next communion. So from year to year they drudge along, obeying the letter and growing worse and worse all the time. Every time such partake they are killed by the letter and are murdering the Son of God.

2. Worshipping the ordinances instead of Christ through them. This class may love them and love to obey them, but they are always talking about the ordinances instead of Christ; they are used to hide Christ instead of being a mirror to reflect him.

3. Pharisaical obedience. 1. "I am holier than thou." They thank their God because they are so much better

than those that do not observe them. Because they obey these forms they think that they are very good; but they are growing worse all the time because they only obey the letter. 2. They love to obey them so as to be enabled to have a club to beat their neighboring churches with. This boasting, berating, condemning and faultfinding is an abomination to God. 4. One great cause of this awful state of affairs has been letter teaching from pulpit and press. I have read and preached, perhaps, as much upon the ordinances as any of our brethren; nearly all has been letter teaching, argument, berating others, exalting the ordinances instead of Christ. So has been my teaching. I have prayed God to forgive and keep me humble that Christ and him only may be exalted through me in their observance.

This is a dark picture but I fear to true. "Made worse by these ordinances? Then we ought to do away with them." O, no. The fault is not with the ordinances, but with us. God designs that we should be hot or cold and not lukewarm. Pharisaical, careless, insincere obedience makes men worse rather than better. This is just as true with scores of other commandments. We should not do away with them but obey as he intended, from the heart. Dear brethren let us daily pray that we may be delivered from this unfortunate condition. Pray that we may never reproach Christ but reflect him.

II. THE REMEDY

1. How the ordinances reflect Christ. They are one of the many trinities of the Word. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are a trinity. They are three persons and yet but one God. They are a three-one-God. Each has his specific work and yet all work together in all they do.

"Holy, holy, holy," this trinity is found frequently in the Word. It means the Father is holy, the Son is holy, and the Spirit is holy. Faith, hope, and love are not a triad but a trinity. You cannot be in possession of the one without more or less of the others. One cannot exist without the others. Paul defines faith, Heb. 11:1, as the substance or assurance of things hoped for. Here hope is included in this definition. Although love is not mentioned it also is included. You cannot have the assurance of heaven without love: hence faith includes hope and love. Paul in giving some of the elements of love, Cor. 13, declares that love hopeth all things and believeth all things. Here is a very plain fact that hope and faith are included in love. They are a trinity, inseparably united. Perhaps some are ready to say: "How then can you define what faith, hope or love is?" They